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New Humanity Day

Called to Unity

Seven for Sanctity

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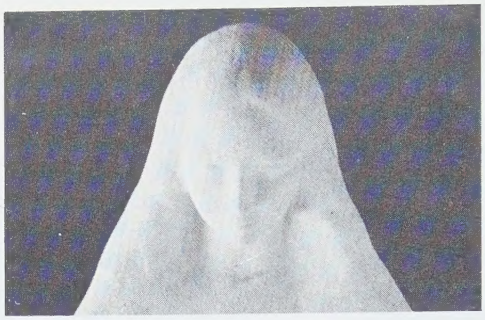

3 *"ALL GENERATIONS WILL CALL ME BLESSED": A meditation by Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement.*

4 *THE ART OF THE VATICAN COME[S] AMERICA: An interview with Dr. [C] Pietrangeli, director general of the Va[t] Museums, on the exhibition of Vatica[n] in America.*

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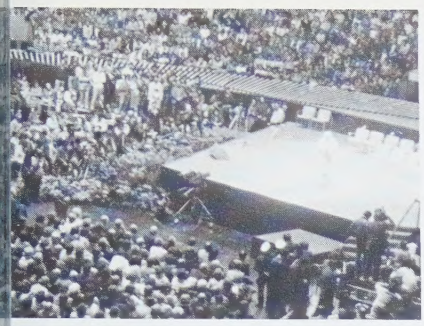
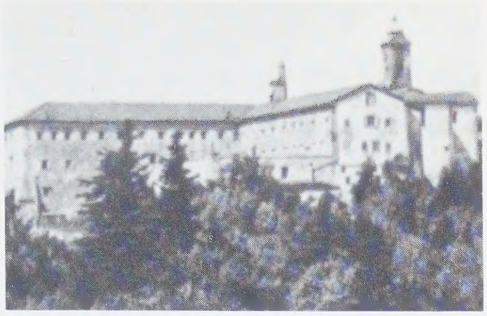


NEWS: Profile of the New Humanity y held in the Sports Arena in Rome, March 1983.



14 *A DIAMOND WITH SEVEN FACETS: The story of the collective journey to sanctity of seven laymen and the consequent founding of the Order of the Servants of Mary.*

24 *NOT JUST A WEEKEND BUT FOREVER: Experiences of a group of young women now at the women's school of formation of the Focolare Movement.*

CONTENTS

Chiara Lubich	"ALL GENERATIONS WILL CALL ME BLESSED"	3
Rosemary Moran	THE ART OF THE VATICAN COMES TO AMERICA	4
	LC NEWS	10
Pino Quartana	A DIAMOND WITH SEVEN FACETS	14
Mary Cass	NOT JUST A WEEKEND BUT FOREVER	24

OTHER DEPARTMENTS

WORD OF LIFE	19
EXPERIENCES	20
A change of country but unity is the same	22

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NORTH AMERICAN FOCOLARE DAY POSTPONED

Dear Friends,

We deeply regret having to inform you that the North American Focolare Day which was to take place on May 29, 1983 has been postponed due to an unforeseen change in the schedule of Chiara Lubich's trip to South and North America.

We do not have a new date for the day. We will keep you informed of any developments.

We know that we can count on your understanding, and we want to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support.

We are looking forward to seeing you in some of the many Focolare activities which will be carried out this Spring and Summer, and assure you of our prayers for all you are doing.

Sincerely yours,

Sharry Silvi — Sebastian Grimaldi

Sharry Silvi
National Director
Women's Branch

Fr. Sebastian Grimaldi
National Director
Men's Branch

NORTH AMERICAN FOCOLARE DAY POSTPONED

"All generations will call me blessed."

by CHIARA LUBICH

Jesus appears to be such a high model for us that someone might be tempted to say, "How can we reach it?" He is a man, but he is also always God.

When we consider our own smallness we would need someone like an inclined plane, who could help us reach him; a channel who, completely one with Christ, could bring the divine here on earth.

This heavenly inclined plane is Mary: a creature like us, equal to us, but all word of God, all clothed in the word of God.

The Magnificat, Mary's greeting to Elizabeth, tells us that she is all word of God. Its originality lies in the fact that it is a succession of phrases from the Scriptures.

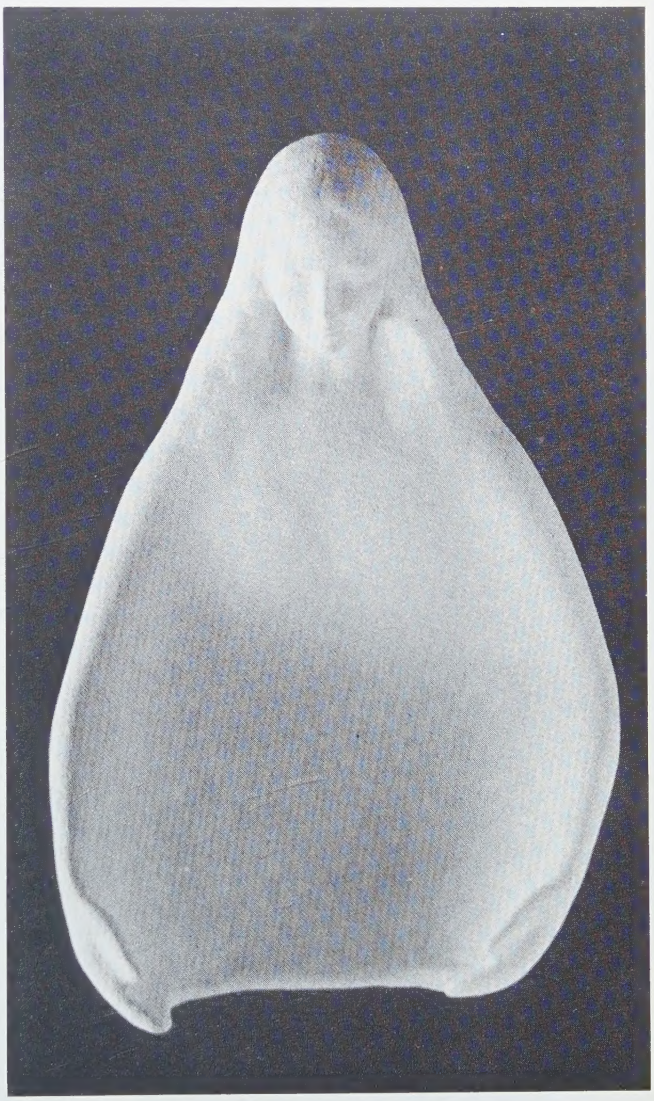
We can see from this how Mary must have been so nourished by the Scriptures that she was accustomed to using its same words when speaking.

"In the canticle (of the Magnificat)," Laurentin has said, "every part of any sentence is an echo of some part of the Bible. There we see Mary so filled with the word of God that she is a clear echo of it. It is for this reason that we do not have to marvel when God (at the Annunciation) answers her (through an angel) in the same way. To the Virgin nourished by the Scripture, the divine messenger speaks the language of Scripture."

The Magnificat was not only a series of ideas and phrases from the Old Testament. It was also a canticle overflowing with poetry, expressing the reality that Mary was living at that moment. As simple a creature as she was, she knew that she was chosen (by divine election) to become the mother of the Creator. The Magnificat has remained throughout the centuries as few other passages have, as the apex of the prayer of the Church which prays, celebrates, gives thanks and praises using this canticle with its endless nuances.

In the Magnificat, Mary sees far ahead and says with a prophetic tone, "All generations will call me Blessed." With the little she knew (the Angel announced to her that she would be the mother of Jesus), she, because of the gift of knowledge and understanding, could foresee and pronounce what a revolution the Gospel would bring about — the revolution that Jesus would bring.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit were present in Mary in all their splendor as in no other creature. She had the gift of understanding in an extraordinary way. Because of this gift she understood the words of Jesus as the Holy Spirit intended them. It is because of the gift of understanding that one can penetrate the words of the Gospel, take them as they are and put them into practice without watering them down or side-stepping them.



Mary, Mother of Welcome **by Ave Cerquetti**

What was so unique about Mary (even though at the level of perfection in her) is that which should be the characteristic of every Christian, that is, to "repeat" Christ who is the Truth, the Word, with the personality that God has given to each one of us. We all live the same Christ but each with the gifts that God has given us. In fact, Christians are like the leaves of a tree — all the same, yet all different.□

the ART of the VATICAN comes to AMERICA

An exhibition of artworks from the Vatican is on tour in the U.S.A.

by ROSEMARY MORAN

The first major exhibition of art from the Vatican collections ever to be sent abroad opened at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City on Sunday, February 26, 1983. Expected to be the most popular art show to tour the United States since "The Treasures of Tutankhamen," the Vatican exhibition will afford millions of Americans an opportunity to view 237 exquisite art treasures, including works by such renowned masters as da Vinci, Caravaggio and Bernini. Selected from among the vast holdings of the Vatican Museums and the Apostolic Library, from St. Peter's Basilica and its Treasury and Grotte, and from the papal apartments, very few of their works have ever before been seen in the United States.

In fact, this traveling exhibition represents a significant break with tradition on the part of the Vatican, which for cen-

(Continued on page 6)

LEFT: A fresco fragment, part of the work **The Ascension of Christ**, *from the apse of the Basilica dei Santi Apostoli, painted by Melozzo da Forli in the late 15th century. It is one of the 237 art treasures selected from the Vatican Museums for the exhibition.*

OPPOSITE PAGE: **Saint Jerome in the Wilderness**, *an unfinished oil painting on wood panel by Leonardo da Vinci. It is the only work by this artist in the Vatican Museums or in Rome.*

(Continued from page 4)

turies has adhered to a policy of not lending works from its collections for exhibition elsewhere. About two decades ago, after permission had been granted for Michaelangelo's *Pieta* to be transported from St. Peter's and exhibited at the 1964 New York World's Fair, it appeared to many that this policy was well on the way out. However, circumstances intervened, as Dr. Carlo Pietrangeli, director general of the Vatican Museums, explained to **Living City** in an exclusive interview which took place earlier this year. "The removal from St. Peter's of such an extremely famous work of art as *The Pieta* aroused enormous controversy in Italy. As a consequence, we received instructions that nothing further was to leave the Vatican. We were not to lend out anything at all. This was in spite of the fact that nothing had happened to the statue. It had gone out and come back without incurring the slightest damage. But, notwithstanding this, that ruling went into effect. With time, however, as happens with certain rules, it was found necessary to mitigate this order. For one thing, certain works from the Vatican Museums were being requested for important art exhibits and were not being lent. It became necessary, as time went on, for us to make exceptions to this directive."

"So for a few years now (and our present pontiff strongly favors this approach) when art works from the Vatican collections have been requested for important exhibitions either within or outside of Italy, and if sufficient precautions have been taken to assure that the works will not be damaged, we have approved certain of these loans.

This practice led to the completely new possibility of the Vatican itself staging an exhibition. In the case of this one, it was actually Cardinal Cooke who took the initiative and asked the Pope to grant permission for an exhibition of artwork from the Vatican to be held here in New York."

Cardinal Cooke had made that request at the urging of Philippe de Montebello, Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, who had written to him in 1979 proposing a major exhibition to be sponsored jointly by the Vatican Museums and the Metropolitan.

"Naturally, we were not opposed to the idea," Pietrangeli commented on this proposal. "We recognized the importance of something of this kind and had seen for ourselves that it could be done. Of course, the one who has the last word on matters of this sort is the Pope . . ." It was during the course of Pope John Paul II's visit to the United States that same year that Cardinal Cooke asked him to grant this unusual request. "He said yes . . ." Pietrangeli remarked, "and deep down it was his way of acknowledging and giving thanks for the great welcome which had received in the United States . . . And so, we embarked on this enterprise."

"We have been working on the exhibition for two years now," Pietrangeli continued, "and we are convinved that the end result is a thing of beauty. This is due not so much to the beauty of the artworks themselves, but, rather, to what the exhibition stands for, and what it can accomplish. A show of this kind taking place

in New York City is truly something significant. There is a pastoral aspect to it which takes precedence over the fact that it is also a beautiful event of artistic value. This is understood. It can be said with certainty that the exhibit has a message to convey."

At a later date, the Holy Father himself explained his motivation in granting approval for the show, and spoke of what he hoped that the exhibition would accomplish:

"Above all, these works of art will have a contribution to make to the men and women of our day. They will speak of history, of the human condition in its universal challenge, and of the endeavors of the human spirit to attain the beauty to which it is attracted. And, yes! These works of art will speak of God, because they speak of man created in the image and likeness of God; and in so many ways they will turn our attention to God himself. And thus the history of the Church repeats itself: her esteem for art and culture is renewed at this moment and in this generation as in the past. And all of this is because, as I stated in my first encyclical: 'The Church's fundamental function in every age and particularly in ours is to direct man's gaze, to point the awareness and experience of the whole of humanity towards the mystery of God'. " (Redemptor Hominis, 10) **L'Osservatore Romano** English Edition.

The title of the exhibit, "The Vatican Collections — The Papacy and Art," gives an indication of the criteria used to select the 237 works which will be shown first in New York (until mid-June), then at The Art Institute of Chicago (end of July through mid-October) and finally at the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum of San Francisco (mid-November through mid-February, 1984). The paintings, scultpure, textiles, and other works of art on exhibit reflect this history of papal patronage and tell the story of the interaction between the papacy and the art world from the time of the foundation of old St. Peter's Basilica to today.

Dr. Pietrangeli was quick to point out that this exhibition has not been geared to attract principally the tourist trade: "The exhibitions criticized most severely, both within Italy, and in other nations as well, are those aimed at tourists: those in which one selects a certain museum, chooses the best it has to offer, and sends it off," he explained. "Exhibitions like that are always frowned upon because they aren't serious; at best, their purpose is a purely economic one — to reap financial gain — and this is not at all what we had in mind."

"The Vatican Collections — The Papacy and Art is what we refer to as a 'historical' exhibition, one which communicates historical facts by means of certain works of art. It was our desire to first relate the history of the Vatican Museums from the time of their formation, and then to reveal the significance of papal patronage as it regards the commissioning of artworks... The works chosen were those which best serve to tell this story."

Stuart Silver, was hired by the Metropolitan Museum to create a layout for the exhibition. It was considered crucial that this aspect of the show be handled in a way which would further emphasize its historical message. In order to accomplish this

The Deposition *by Caravaggio, an oil painting on canvas, believed by many to be the artist's greatest work.*

The exhibit offered the Vatican Museums the opportunity to restore many works of art such as the **Apollo Belvedere** *(above), restoration work which might not have otherwise been possible for years.*

goal, the exhibition is divided into five sections. The first of these is entitled *The Popes and Old St. Peter's: From Sylvester I (314-335) to Julius II (1503-1513).* It contains numerous early Christian, medieval and early Renaissance works which adorned the Basilica of Old St. Peter's (constructed shortly after 313 A.D.) until the Renaissance Basilica of St. Peter's was built in the 16th century. Among the artistic highlights found in this section are an angel in mosaic attributed to Giotto (circa 1310), and two 13th-century frescoes of Saints Peter and Paul.

The second section, entitled *Patronage and Collecting from Nicholas III (1277-1280) to Alexander VII (1655-1667),* includes masterpieces of Fra Angelico, Botticelli, Perugino, Raphael and Michelangelo. These are among the countless works commissioned by a series of popes who were principally concerned with decorating the papal residence adjacent to St. Peter's, and the Sistine Chapel.

One of the sculptures shown in this section has a particularly interesting history. It is the highly acclaimed *Apollo Belvedere*, a marble Roman copy (130-140 A.D.) of a lost Greek bronze statue from about 330 B.C. The *Apollo Belvedere*, attributed to Leochares, was placed in the courtyard of the papal residence by Pope Julius II in 1503. It is the first piece of antique sculpture known to have entered the papal collection at the Vatican.

Since 1511, the statue had been anchored to a wall in an alcove of the Octagonal Court by an iron bar which held it upright and in place. However, like almost all of the other works exhibited, the *Apollo Belvedere*, underwent restoration in preparation for the show. (The funding for this costly and lengthy process was part of the exhibition's 8 million dollar budget. Corporate sponsors were largely responsible for covering the general expenses.) In the course of this restoration it was discovered that the *Apollo Belvedere* was leaning about five centimeters too far forward. The discovery of this enabled restorers to reposition it so that it now stands on its own for the first time in nearly five centuries and visitors to the exhibit are able to view it in the round.

Other works in this section include the first century B.C. *Belvedere Torso* much admired by Michelangelo, a set of exquisitely woven pontifical vestments (circa 1595) and the great *Farnese Cross*, a masterpiece of goldsmith work.

Section III entitled *The Creation of the Vatican Museums: From Benedict XVI (1740-1758) to Pius VII (1800-1823)* includes works from the first public museums formally established by the Vatican.

Photos used for this article courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, works on loan from the Vatican Museums. Photos by Scala, N.Y.

The exhibition is divided into five sections and its desire is to relate the history of the Vatican Museums and the significance of papal patronage. The works on display include such pieces as this bronze disk (right) dating from the fifth century B.C. and this painted wood and leather African mask (above) sent to the Vatican by a missionary in 1924.

Music-Making Angels, by Melozzo da Forli, the powerful *Deposition* (1602-1604) by Caravaggio, and Leonardo da Vinci's unfinished oil painting of *St. Jerome* (1842) are among the many art treasures exhibited here.

Section IV depicts *The Development of Museums Under Gregory XVI (1831-1846) and Pius IX (1846-1878).* The majestic *Augustus of Prima Porta* (circa 20 B.C.), the early Christian *Good Shepherd* in marble, and a 3rd-century B.C. bronze statuette of a boy, are presented in this segment of the show.

The final section of the exhibit, *New Directions in Patronage and Collecting From Pius XI (1922-1939) to Paul VI (1963-1978)*, closes the show with selected works from the last two Vatican collections, both established in the 20th century. Included from the Museo Missionario - Etnologico (founded in 1926 to document and study the world's religions) are the stone figure of an Aztec God, wooden deity figures from Polynesia, and several African masks.

Works from the collection of Modern Religious Art (established in 1973) includes *The Holy Face* 1946 by Georges Rouault, and *The Tree of Life* (1949) by Henri Matisse.

Several weeks before the exhibit was opened to the public, a group of dignitaries, including His Eminence Terrence Cardinal Cooke of New York, was invited to preview the show. Afterwards, the Cardinal shared his impressions at a dinner in honor of the occasion:

"I am struck with the oneness we share with the members of the human family throughout the ages — the oneness especially in our guest for the highest ideals of the human spirit — truth, beauty, and peace.

"I am filled with an awareness, as I am sure you are, that truth and beauty transcend time and space and unite people of all times in the eternal love of our God."

In the course of this interview a few weeks later, Dr. Pietrangeli commented along the same lines: "There is a direct rapport between art and worship," he remarked. "This is the origin of the popes' interest in collecting works of art. . . They later saw that art also has a way of educating, of elevating the spirit. It was for this reason that they felt the need to create a museum in Rome. They wanted to ensure that these artworks would not be taken out of the city, and they regarded the museum as a means of elevating the spirit. This, in reality, is the essence of art." □

Rome, March 20

Photos for this article credit: *L'Osservatore Romano* Arturo Mari

983. New Humanity Day

Pope John Paul II at the New Humanity Day of the Focolare Movement, March 20, 1983.

"Many times, when I am sad, one word comes to my mind. . . Focolarini, and I feel consoled."

These words were spoken by Pope John Paul II to 20,000 members of the Focolare Movement, New Humanity section, gathered from many nations and every continent in the Sports Arena in Rome on March 20th, 1983.

Present at the day-long gathering were 182 representatives from all over North America.

The New Humanity, having at its basis the spirituality of unity of the Focolare Movement, wishes to contribute in giving a Christian soul to our society. It envisions the transformation and renewal of all areas of human endeavor (economics, education, politics, art, health, etc.) through the application of the Gospel teachings.

The day began with a presentation by Chiara Lubich, Founder and President of the Focolare Movement, and it was climaxed by an address by Pope John Paul II who encouraged the participants in their work.

Throughout the day representatives of the various worlds of endeavor related their experiences in bringing about new relationships in the milieu in which they live and work. The range of experiences was wide, including that of an internationally-known psychologist, a world-acclaimed ballerina, a teacher from New York, a handicapped worker, etc. Groups from South America, Asia and Lebanon shared their attempt at resolving social problems through the life of a Christian community.

Chiara Lubich spoke in the morning, and once again in the afternoon briefly presenting the purpose and structure of the New Humanity Movement to the Holy Father. The following is the text of her afternoon presentation.

"Holy Father,

"It is with great joy that we thank you for your presence here among us.

"For us, Your Holiness, who desire, with the help of God, to have Jesus and his Gospel ever present in our thoughts and in our hearts, there truly is no greater gift than to have with us the one who is his Vicar on earth.

"Your presence, Your Holiness, at our annual conventions, assures us of your fatherly care and concern, and of your affection for us, your children. At the same time it is also the most reliable guarantee of the blessing of God on our Movement.

"Here today in the Sports Arena, coming from all five continents, are members of the 'New Humanity Movement.' It is a typically lay offspring of the Focolare Movement.

"Its members are representatives of every human condition; they belong to all different social categories and work in a wide

Pope John Paul II pauses with Chiara Lubich after having addressed the participants of the Congress, encouraging them in their work.

variety of occupations — office workers, doctors, laborers, politicians, artists, teachers, economists, nurses. . .

"Their commitment in the Movement is that of giving a Christian soul to our present-day society, contributing in this way to a renewal of both people and structures.

"In particular they wish to bear witness, with their lives, and demonstrate with concrete examples to the world around, the powerful incidence of the Gospel even on the most earthly aspects of individual and social life: in other words the contribution that the word of God, when it is put into practice, can offer in building the "earthly city."

"Since anyone can try and live the Gospel in his or her own field of endeavor, with those with whom he or she comes in contact, the New Humanity Movement is divided not so much into categories as into 'worlds': the 'world of art,' the 'world of medicine'... They are 'worlds' in which these people meet and work daily shoulder to shoulder: doctors, nurses and patients in the 'world of medicine'; students, teachers, janitors and parents in the 'world of education', and so on.

"The soul of the 'New Humanity Movement' is the branch of men and women volunteers; their vocation is a total dedication to God without a particular consecration with vows.

"Immersed in the world, the most suitable place for their activities, they live the Gospel following the example of the first Christian communities. They wish to emulate their life in this century by being "one heart and one soul" and, as a consequence, by sharing their material and spiritual goods.

"In our world, chilled by materialism and consumerism; impoverished and swerved by hedonism, violence and all existing evils, they try to bring about the fire, the light, the strength and the fullness of life coming from the presence of the Risen Lord. They make every effort, therefore, to see that his presence may shine through them embracing by their daily crosses, they commit themselves through the deepest possible unity with one another, to generate his presence in homes, hospitals, schools, offices, workshops . . . everywhere — so that these different 'worlds' can be illuminated, guided and supported by him while on their way to renewal.

"This day, characterized by an in-depth look at the evangelical ideals of the Movement, at its work in the light of Christian social doctrine, and by a succession of experiences, closes here, Your Holiness, with your presence and your much-awaited word."

"Many times, when I am sad, one word comes to my mind . . . Focolarini and I am consoled."

Pope John Paul II

Pope John Paul II then addressed the very attentive audience. We are publishing here the closing lines of his talk.

"Dearest Brothers and Sisters,

"You and your Movement are called in a special way to give this incisive witness. In communion with the whole Church, and with its legitimate Shepherds, you must hold up high the light of the Gospel as "the lamp on the lamp-stand" (Cf. Mt. 5:14-15).

"Maintain always unchanged the enthusiasm of your commitment, with the humility of those who know that "one sows and another reaps" and that the one who has the blessed fortune to reap depends on the sowing done by others as the Lord opportunely reminds us (Cf. Jn. 4:36-38).

"Give, therefore, to the Church, a valid example of constant attention to the Word of God, of prayer, of mutual sharing, of spiritual joy, of deep respect for the charisms of others, of harmonious and fruitful engrafting in the great framework of the body of Christ, in a word, an example of authentic Christian maturity.

"I have seen from the program of your works that you have spent a very intense day, especially the multiplicity of talks that have given such a very wide panorama of problems, environments, situations where it is necessary to place the transforming seed of the Gospel. Who knows how much motivation you have received, how many proposals you have made, how generously you have renewed your availability.

"May the Lord enlighten, confirm, purify and strengthen your minds and your hearts. For my part I want to assure you my special remembrance in your prayers. Be certain that I am interested in your activities and that I expect much from you in the realm of a fruitful evangelical witness 'for a New Humaity,' according to the theme of your Congress.

"And, together with my affection, may my Apostolic Blessing, which I am glad to extend to you with all my heart, accompany you. And I wish to extend it to all your beloved, to your friends and to all those you will meet on your way as you go along the pathways of the world." □

(Own translation.)

Further coverage of this event will be published in an upcoming issue of **Living City**.

A diamond with seven facets

750 years ago a "spontaneous group" of seven Florentine laymen got together to live a Marian ideal of contemplation and of service. Out of this first community, the Order of the Servants of Mary was born.

by PINO QUARTANA

Moving north from Florence, past the Fiesole junction, we come to a slightly climbing road leading to Pratolino and Brevigliano, where the climb begins to get steeper but still fairly practicable by car. Then, suddenly, we come upon Mount Senario, a dome-shaped hill amidst pine woods and, standing on its peak, a centuries old structure: the Priory of the Servants of Mary. Even at a great distance, it gives the impression of quiet and solitude. The last sharply sloping stretch opens into a platform from which a stairway leads up to the priory and adjacent church.

Inside, at the end of a row of several chapels — of Our Lady of Sorrows, of St. Joseph, of the Apparition — there is, finally, the Chapel of the Seven Saints with the bronze urn containing the relics of the seven founders of the Order of the Servants of Mary.

Their bodies had been buried right here and were found around the middle of the seventeenth century, during some reconstruction work in the church, thus confirming what had already been known from the study of old documents. Now they are here together. Together in the memory and devotion of the peo-

ple, as they had been in their life and spiritual experience for which — as an unprecedented, exceptional event in Church history — all seven of them together were proclaimed blessed as one man.

Who were these seven who went to sanctity "as a body," and who have been called "one single diamond with seven facets"?

In the early years of the 14th century, the citizens of Florence were accustomed to seeing an old man, over 100 years old, as he went about the busy city streets, begging at the doors of stores and workshops, among the merchants' stands in the market place. He was still sprightly, and even though the years and a hard life of privations and sacrifices had left its mark on his body, his face and eyes radiated love. His continuous service to his fellowmen over such an exceptionally long time made Fra' Alessio of the Falconieri a familiar figure. Born in the year 1200, he died in 1310, and was

The cell of Salviati, or of the miraculous vine, at Mount Senario. Here, the story goes, a vine branch blossomed miraculously in mid-winter. It was a sign that the message of the Seven Founders was to be carried to many. Today the servants of Mary are present on all continents. In Italy there are more than 600 monks, distributed in about 90 homes, aptly called "fraternities."

The Shrine of Mount Senario near Florence. It is the most famous priory of the Servants of Mary, where the bodies of the Seven Founders are buried and venerated.

the one among the seven who, together with Buonfiglio of the Monaldi, first Prior of the Servants of Mary, has left the most reliable data. As to the names and data of the others, the various legends and stories about them don't always coincide. But even this discrepancy somehow bespeaks the deeper reality of their experience, that of being a "cluster of men, as though they were one."

Here is what we know about them with reasonable historical certainty. The city: Florence; the time: the century of St. Francis of Assisi; the political situation: fierce battles between the supporters of the Pope and those of the Emperor; the economical situation: an upsurge of activity in the arts, crafts and trade, speedy accumulation of great wealths; the struggle for supremacy of the emerging middle class, a strengthening of the communal experience and a flourishing of new ideas in the spiritual field as well.

Our seven were all of gentleman-like birth, they were all adults, some had families, all of them were textile merchants, which means they belonged to the affluent Florentine upper middle class on their way to becoming even more affluent all the time. But all seven, each of them individually, decided not to follow this trend but move into the opposite direction instead. They chose to participate in the stirrings of charity, penance and peace which in those times were felt in Florence as elsewhere, especially under the influence of the various begging orders, and the renewal they brought about in the Church. They were lay people seeking to rediscover the authenticity of the Gospel in order to translate it into everyday life, but with a new and original mandate of unity. This mandate, which matured within the framework of a Marian experience (they all belonged to the Old Company of the Holy Virgin, which in those days was quite active in all kinds of relief and charity work in Florence) maintained and developed this particular characteristic trait. It was not due to chance then, that, according to tradition, their life was higlighted by particular moments of encounter with Mary.

After having provided for their families and distributed all their remaining belongings to the poor, the seven entered a concrete pact of friendship. As they left everything behind, they had to overcome many difficulties, such as a lack of understanding and even hostility from many people around them.

But there were also those who did appreciate and encourage them, as for instance Jacopo from Poggibonsi, Chaplain of the "Compagnia maggiore" and Ardingo Trotto, Bishop of Florence. With the latter's approval, they went and lived in a bare cabin in a locality called Cafaggio, near the city walls. Today we would call them a "spontaneous group" of laymen vowed to a communal life. Here, always according to tradition, their life of contemplation and prayer was continuously disrupted by the comings and goings of the people who were attracted by their way of life, until finally in 1245, they were forced to flee to the most absolute solitude and poverty of Mount Senario.

But even there it didn't take long for the people to seek them out, eager to share in some way their experience. It was a miracle that occurred right there that determined the fate of the Order and Mount Senario. One day in mid-winter as the seven were gathered in prayer — asking God whether it was his will that they remain together, continuing their life of solitude and contemplation, or open up to the others — one of the vine branches suddenly blossomed into flowers, grapes and new leaves. It was understood as a sign that the gift they had received from God was to be shared by many others. . .

This is how the Order of the Servants of Mary began to grow and expand, with the monks going down into the valley, bringing their message of brotherhood, service and devotion. They particularly urged their followers to always imitate Mary whom they venerated particularly in the moment of her grief at the foot of the cross — Our Lady of Sorrows.

An interview with Michel Sincery, Prior General of the Order of the Servants of Mary

Question: It is certainly true that the story of these Seven Founders of the Servants of Mary is quite out of the ordinary. Even their canonization is unique, I think, since it was based on collective miracles, that is to say on miracles obtained by invoking all seven of them, which does say a great deal about the bond that united them.

Answer: Apart from the miracles, the fact that hs always been brought into focus and which we most wish to emphasize today is the fraternal love that bound them together. From the very beginning it wa said that they were "one heart and one soul."

Before they went to live together, they all belonged to the Marian confraternity which at the time was very important in Florence. Why did they tie themselves into such a close and final bond? I always say it was the Holy Spirit that moved them. In the early times, their life was very simple, very poor, devoted to serving people, but there was also a strong need for contemplation. And they tried very hard to protect it, seeking out hidden refuges for hermits. But that which characterized them most and above everything else, was their fraternal love. Their canonization no doubt was rather complicated, but what was most beautiful and original was that they were canonized together, as one person.

Question: From what you tell me, I see that the matter of fraternity is very much felt by the Servants of Mary today. How is it translated into the life and the structure of the Order in our day?

Answer: We wanted this aspect greatly emphasized in our Constitutions. In 1968 we held a special Chapter near Madrid to revise these Constitutions and, in 1977, in Barcelona, we have drawn up the final text to be presented to the Holy See. The part regarding our spirituality is centered on the aspect of fraternity and service — service inspired by the Virgin Mary, whom the Seven Founders have always considered their founding mother and their inspiration.

Question: As to service, which is also greatly emphasized in your constitution, do I understand correctly that you are open to any kind of ecclesial service?

Answer: We certainly are. We try to respond to the needs of the world around us without forgetting, however, that the first service we are bound to perform is the witness given because of our mutual love. For this reason, too, we would like to renew the structures of our priories all over the world as much as possible. We want to make sure that each priory has sufficient number of brothers to offer this first, fundamental ser-

(Continued on page 18)

The Church of the Annunciation in Florence. Our Lady protecting the Servants of Mary under her mantle. The emphasis on unity among the founders of the Order, which grew and matured within the framework of a Marian experience, has always kept this characteristic alive. The beginning of their fraternity is traced back to the Feast of the Assumption in 1923.

Father Michel Sincery, Prior General of the Order of the Servants of Mary, who gave us the interview. "We are a community of brothers because of Christ whom we wish to follow, with Mary walking at our side."

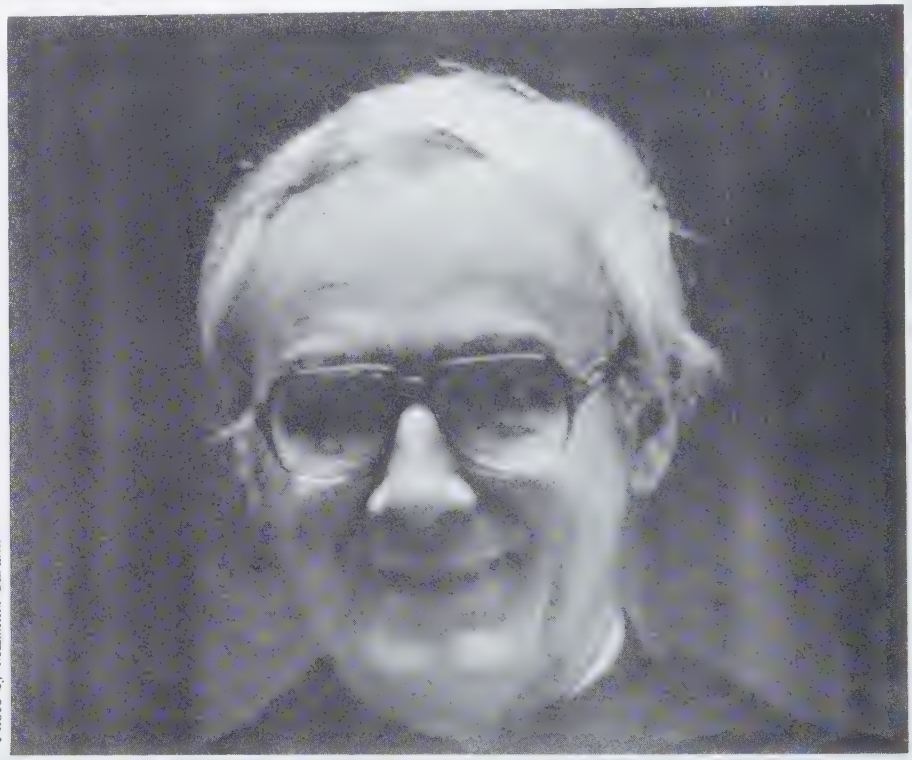


Photo by Massimo Cardilli

(Continued from page 16)

vice. And the model for everything is Mary. Christ, we know, is our only Mediator. In Mary we see the one who helps us follow in his footsteps. Every moment of her life teaches and inspires us in all our attitudes and behavior. The Annunciation: readiness to do God's will; the Visitation: service; Mary at the foot of the Cross: acceptance of the most painful trials.
And then there is the wedding of Cana: "Do whatever he tells you," said Mary to the servants at the banquet. This is what we, the Servants of Mary, are learning from her, to do "whatever he tells us to do."

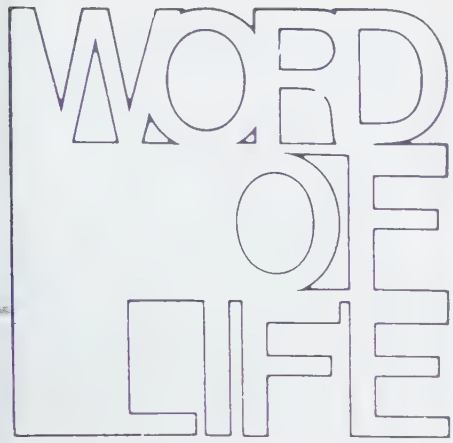
Question: In which way do the structures of these constitutions reflect this spirit of fraternity?

Answer: To give you an example, unlike other Orders and Congregations where the Provincial is chosen by the General and his counsel, in our Order it is the brothers in each Province who elect his with solemn votes, while the Prior General merely confirms their choice. This collegiality is very important to us and so is this continuous exchange, because it gives us the guarantee that the fraternity, which is at the basis of all our spirituality, is preserved. We feel that it is most pertinent to our times and fills the needs of today's men and women, especially the young, who wish to stay together, or to find always new ways to relate to one another and live in a spirit of brotherly love.

There are only a few of us, Servants of Mary, but there are so many movements today aspiring to this fraternity, so that together with the various women's and men's congregations, as well as with the secular institutions which are connected with our Order, we try to promote it as much as possible.

Question: By what means?

Answer: This year marks the 750th anniversary since the Order's inception which, according to tradition, occurred in the year 1233, and we want to take advantage of this occasion to promote this fraternal communion and help one another to go ahead, to be always faithful to our spirituality which is nothing more than the eternal Gospel message to love one another. It is brotherhood which is not philanthropy, but is based on the Gospel. We are a community of brothers because of Christ whom we wish to follow, and we want to do it with Mary on our side.□



"If anyone loves me
he will keep my words,
and my Father will
love him,
and we shall come to him
and make our home
with him"

(John 14:23).

The word makes us live.

The word makes us free.

The word guarantees happiness.

The word converts.

The word purifies us.

The word draws us to our specific vocations.

The word brings forth the hatred of the world and the sanctity of the disciple.

The word makes us see the truth.

The word brings comfort.

The word gives us joy.

The word produces works.

The word gives wisdom.

The word preserves us from human concerns.

The word obtains everything.

The word brings about union with God.

The word gives us hope of eternal life.

The word makes us one.

The word changes one's mentality.

The word makes each soul a heaven.

"If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him" (Jn. 14:23).

These words occur in the midst of Jesus' powerful, intense farewell to his apostles before his death. He has just promised, among other things, to reveal himself to those who love him.

Then Jude asks him why he intends to reveal himself only to them and not to everyone. The apostle imagines and hopes for a great public manifestation of Jesus, one that could change the course of history, and that would be, in his opinion, more effective for the conversion of the world.

But Jesus thinks otherwise, and explains that his way of revealing himself will be at once simple and extraordinary: wherever there is faith and love, the Trinity will come into the hearts of the faithful.

"If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him."

The chosen people had long awaited the coming of the Lord, as is beautifully expressed in this Scripture verse: "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! See, I am coming to dwell in your midst, says the Lord" (Zech. 2:14).

With his answer to Jude, Jesus indicates how he will remain in the midst of his own after his death. And he explains how people will be able to establish a relationship with him after he has risen, and be in communion with him, the risen Lord.

"If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him."

Therefore, Jesus can be present right now in the individual Christian and in the midst of the community. There is no need to wait for the future. The temple he desires is not so much one of bricks and mortar, but rather it is the human heart itself, which thus becomes the new tabernacle, the dwelling place of the Trinity.

"If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him."

But how can Christians achieve this? How can they have God come and dwell in their hearts? Through love for Jesus, a love that is not mere sentimentalism, but that is lived out by keeping his words.

When the Christian has this kind of love, proven by facts, then God responds with his own love: the Trinity comes to dwell in the person's heart.

"If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him."

". . . keep my word." What is the word that the Christian is called to keep? In John's Gospel, "my word" is often synonymous with "my commandments."

EXPERIENCES

The following are experiences in living the Gospel which some of our readers have shared with us.

Therefore, the Christian is called to keep Jesus' commandments. But these must not be viewed primarily as a list of laws. They must be understood as being summed up in the command Jesus illustrated by washing his disciples' feet: *the commandment of mutual love*. God commands all Christians to love one another to the point of giving themselves completely, as Jesus taught and did.

"If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him."

How can we live this word of life well? How can we reach the point when the Father himself will love us and the Trinity will come to dwell within us? By loving one another with all our hearts, and doing it with decision and perseverance.

It is principally through loving in this way that we Christians can begin to live that deep-reaching Christian asceticism that the crucified Jesus demands of us. For, the practice of mutual love causes the other virtues to blossom in our hearts and this love is also the surest gauge of Christian holiness.

And, finally, it is through mutual love that Jesus, the risen Lord, is made present in the heart of each individual Christian and in the midst of the Christian community.

Chiara Lubich

MARIA'S ARRIVAL

Last June the opportunity arose for me to teach full time. What arrangements to make for the children, (one in school half days, the other with a fourth birthday in January), was an immediate situation to deal with.

Through a girl who worked in the neighborhood, I learned that her friend Maria in Stockholm had just been very disappointed. After she'd made arrangements and bought a ticket to Toronto, the family that she was to have worked for decided they didn't need her. I really felt the let-down this must have been for her at nineteen, and so we thought that maybe we could help her come to Canada.

I wrote to her and there was no answer for over a month. This worried and disappointed me, since it didn't go along with what her friend was telling us - Maria was excited, happy and making arrangements.

Toward the end of August, with still no reply, we wanted to drop the whole matter and look for someone here. But the thought of her previous disappointment and doing the same thing to her again, we knew that that would be looking out for our interests rather than loving her. We decided to wait and in fact a letter arrived in a few days. We learned that her work-permit would arrive in a week to ten days and then she could leave immediately.

I thought that was it; by continuing to try to love her by making myself one, things worked out well for both of us. No! Two days after school started, her friend called and said another difficulty prevented her from coming until the 25th.

My first reaction was annoyance since it was a difficulty that could have been avoided, but again I put myself in her shoes and tried to see things from the point of view of a nineteen-year-old girl leaving her country for something unknown. I phoned Stockholm and told her not to worry, the 25th was fine. A few days later another change: for sure everything was all set and she'd arrive on the 21st.

The night before her arrival, the friend in Toronto called to tell me Maria had just phoned from Stockholm in tears, she'd been turned back at the airport because of no US visa. (Her flight landed in New York.) This was too much! A second thought asked me how would I have felt if this happened to me.

Again I phoned Sweden and when she answered the phone I said, "You sound sad, but we're waiting for you whenever you can get here."

A month later after she arrived she was really homesick and I thought Maria would catch the next plane home. But I had no thought or desire to look for another arrangement *just in case*. I only knew, we had to renew our efforts so that she'd know we were her "family." The word of life for that month, "Anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant" (Mk. 10:43), was a refrain in my mind helping me in my efforts to love.

The following week she was happy. I congratulated her for

having accomplished this and she gave me a tremendous gift when she told me it was mostly because of the way I am.

E. S.

"DEALING" WITH PEOPLE

I am in the construction business and for a while I was working on condominiums, joining one unit to an already existing one. The owner of this particular unit wanted, among other things, a "Murphy bed" installed. A Murphy bed is a bed that comes out of the wall. Making up the area for his bed, I found that the floor was really out of level; so I had to build it up. Then the owner wanted a set of French doors on the bed so that in a closed position it looked like doors leading out onto a terrace. The owner also wanted a motor on it so that with a switch it would go up and down.

My supervisor called the installer of the bed so that he could explain the conditions to him but the installer didn't like the fact that someone was telling him how to install the bed. My supervisor all the same suggested that he come over to the apartment and see for himself what the situation was. But the installer said not to worry about it and just wouldn't listen.

The next day the installer came out on the job. The material had been delivered and he noticed first thing that the company had sent the wrong frame for the bed. He had to drill all kinds of holes in this metal frame to install the motor for the bed. He immediately got upset and started to complain. Then he tried to install the motor into the concrete and he found he didn't have long enough anchors to anchor the motor. He complained even more about this. Meanwhile the owner kept coming in and out of the apartment and heard everything that was going on.

By the afternoon it seemed that everything that the installer had tried had failed. He even had a different motor sent up from his company but he realized that he wasn't going to make it timewise and that he would have to come back the next day to complete it. He worked on a commission basis and it meant that he would have to come back on his own time. He was really mad.

He got on the phone and talked to his boss and told him he wasn't going to finish the job because there were too many problems. But his boss said he would have to come back.

After he got off the phone I thought for a moment about the word of life we were living that month: "Anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant" (Mk. 10:43). I wanted to put it into practice. I made up my mind that when the installer came back I would try to help him, to serve him in every possible way so that he could get the door installed quickly and properly. Just before he left for home I said to him, "Look, if you want to install this door right you have to have these long anchors. I can get them through our supplier and have them for you in the morning."

After the man left the owner of the condominium came up to me and said he didn't like the way the installer complained all the time. He said he wasn't sure if he wanted him to install the bed at all.

Anyway the man came back the next morning and again not in the best disposition. But I started out immediately with this attitude of serving. I showed him the anchors I had gotten and where I saw that he had damaged the wood base I offered to make a new base for him and drill the holes. He was very happy to hear that I would make the new base. He then installed the long anchors and it worked very well. By 10 o'clock his attitude had completely changed and he had become more sociable.

During the day I helped him whenever he needed help. When it came time to install the door on to the bottom of the frame, I helped him with that, and then with the mattresses and so on. A little after lunch everything was ready and the owner walked in just as we had pushed the button. The bed went up and fit perfectly into position. The margin around the door was perfect and the owner was really happy. He went away and came back with a bottle of wine and said, "Beautiful job, nice installation." It was his way of showing his gratitude.

After the installer left, the owner came up to me and said, "You really have a way of dealing with people who are difficult to get along with. Did you see the change in him from yesterday to today?" I thought to myself that all I had done was to try and live the Word of Life and that was where this way of "dealing" with people came from.

H. B.

A change of country, but unity is the same

About two years ago I came to this country from Brazil. This is a beautiful country. I love the United States. In Brazil I was very active in the Gen[1] Movement from my early teens into my twenties. Many things in my life there were difficult; my mother died while I was young and then my father died. There were other problems as well. As part of the Gen Movement I grew in an ever-deeper relationship with Jesus, loving him especially in the moment of his abandonment when he cried: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"(Mk. 15:34). In Jesus Forsaken I found the answer to my difficulties and I found great joy.

Then I was offered the possibility of coming to the United States. It was a very difficult decision for me and I tried to see what God wanted of me. I was a little afraid, especially since I couldn't speak English at all, but I decided to come.

Here in the United States I needed a job. I had worked as a receptionist in Brazil and had even done a little modelling. Here I applied for a job cleaning rooms in a large hotel which is part of a national chain. I was very happy when I heard I had been accepted. This job was the will of God for me; I resolved to do it well. The Gen want to build unity wherever they are. I also resolved to be a person of unity, a real Christian, in the hotel.

At first things went very well. I liked my work. I even had some success in changing the atmosphere at the hotel. The employees ate lunch together in a lunchroom. To me it seemed so stark a place to eat; nothing had been done to make it pleasant. Everyone served themselves and that was it. I brought in a few things to make the room more attractive — flowers and a tablecloth. I also offered to get things for the others while I was up. At first someone noticed and asked my why I was doing this, but gradually the others began to get things for one another at lunch time. The atmosphere in the lunchroom gradually began to change and was more like that of a family.

After I had been there awhile, the manager offered my the job of being a cocktail waitress. It was a really good job, he assured me, with good money. But the uniform of the cocktail waitress in that hotel was very short, almost sleazy. I felt I could not wear that uniform. I told the manager as nicely as I could, that I did not want to be a cocktail waitress; that I was very happy with my present job.

Sometimes I would finish all the rooms assigned to me before the end of the day. I noticed that no one offered to help anyone else in the hotel; but I decided to offer to help. At first the reaction was one of shock. Some people always accepted my help but never offered to help me when I was especially busy. Then came a period when I was having a lot of pain in my back. I couldn't do all of my work. Many helped me with my rooms during that time and for me it was the 'hundredfold'[2]because I had tried to love the others without expecting anything in return.

One day, one of the hotel guests stopped me and asked me to get her some ice. She was not in one of the rooms assigned to me. A short ways down the hall was the person who was responsible for the guests in that room. I felt sure the other maid had heard the request. I was tempted to ask the other person to get the ice. That month in the Focolare Movement we were living a phrase of the Gospel in which Jesus urges us to be servants of one another: "Anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant" (Mk. 10:43). I resolved to get the ice for the guest, doing it "for Jesus." I emptied the ice container on that floor and brought it to her. "Oh, this isn't enough. We need more than this." I felt this was too much. Not only was it not my job to get her the ice, but now she was asking me to go two floors up to the closest place I could get more ice. Then I remembered "for you, Jesus" and I went. She was very happy. She said to me, "You are so nice, so pleasant. We travel a lot. We don't see this. What is your secret?" I said, "I don't have a secret." I left to go back to my work but I didn't feel quite at peace. I remembered I had a copy of the Word of Life, the sentence from the Gospel with the commentary that I was trying to live that month. I knocked on her door. "This is my secret," I said, handing her the copy of the Word of Life.

One of the inspectors who represents the chain of hotels in which I am employed happened to be present when a note was left at the desk in which a guest praised me for doing such a fine job and being so courteous. (I think it was the lady for whom I had gotten the ice.) Many times guests have thanked me for doing such a fine job. The reaction of some of the others was: "Well, so what, that doesn't get you any more money." But I was always happy nonetheless.

The inspector went through all the rooms, noting how well they were cleaned. He called a meeting for all of us responsible for the rooms. He chose one of my rooms for the meeting. He said that he had seen some things he didn't like but that this room looked "new." He asked me what I did to make my rooms look new. I told him that I prepared each room as if it were in my home, as if I were preparing it for a guest. I cleaned the lamps a certain way so that they remained sparkling. I did everything to make the room as beautiful as possible. The inspector then shared with everyone the note that had been left at the desk praising me. He called a meeting for the next day for all those who cleaned the rooms, but he told me I didn't need to come.

I left that day with such a joy in my heart; I didn't look at the others to see what their reaction might be. I offered this praise to Jesus because it had been for him that I had prepared each room. He was my guest.

Recently we had a guest in the hotel for several days. This person seemed quite strange to me. I was not responsible for that room, but I was assigned to clean rooms that were close by. After being off work for a couple of days, I happened to open the door of the room that had been occupied by that guest. There was such a strong odor in that room that I immediately closed the door. I walked away thinking, "This room is not my responsibility. Let someone else find out what is wrong." My conscience, that "little voice" within, told me to go back. The room looked

fine. The bed was made, the bathroom was clean, the closet was empty. I looked under the sheets, under the bed. The person who had been there had been incontinent. The mattress and rug were unbelievable. I was sick from the odor.

I went down to the main desk looking for my supervisors. I couldn't find them. The manager asked me what was wrong. I told him the room number. "Oh, yes. I assigned a guest to that room yesterday. He said there was a funny odor in the room and asked for another room. I gave it to him." I told the manager there was more than a "funny odor" in the room. He couldn't believe the sight and the odor.

"Who was responsible for cleaning this room?" he asked. I didn't know. The manager called a meeting. He repeated his question when everyone was present. My supervisor and a co-worker said I was responsible for the room.

I couldn't believe it. "I wasn't responsible for that room."

"You're lying," they both said.

Trying to keep my composure, I said, "This is not true. What they are saying is wrong." The women again said I was lying. They did not know about the guest who had requested another room. Because of the timing of that incident, the manager could determine that I could not have been the one responsible for that room.

He asked again, "Who was responsible for that room?" One of the other maids slowly raised her hand. "Why didn't you tell me before?" She said that the other two women told her they wanted to get me in trouble. My supervisor and the other co-worker had told her to lie.

The manager said, "You know, if certain people had been assigned to that room, this hotel could have been put out of business."

I was shocked that this could have happened. I was thankful that I had been vindicated. On the other hand, I couldn't understand the others. I knew there was resentment. Some of the others had been there for nine years or more while I had been there only two. It was hard for them to see me do well. At lunch the atmosphere was very heavy. There was very little talking. I went outside and found the busboy. I was desperate. "Please do something for me. It is very important." I remembered that my supervisor liked bananas and the other co-worker loved coconut. "Go to the bakery and buy one banana cream pie and one coconut cake. Here is the money. Be sure to get back before lunch is over."

I gave the pie to one and the cake to the other. Immediately each one said, "I'm really sorry for what I did." We then talked for a while about other things like our weekends and I felt a real peace and joy.

One of my co-workers came up to me after lunch. "I come from a big family of sixteen children. None of them are like you though. I don't believe you. What's your secret?" I didn't know what to say. "I don't have a secret."

"I don't believe you; you must have a secret." I paused for a moment. "My only secret is Jesus; I try to do everything for him."

Since coming to the United States I've had two experiences that were particularly strong as I participated in various Focolare meetings here. One was the Mariapolis[3]. Brazil has a different culture than this country and I didn't know what to expect of my first Mariapolis here. It was certainly a beautiful experience. The language was different, as was the food, but the Mariapolis was the same and I was very happy.

Now I have become a "Volunteer"[4] in the Focolare Movement. I still love the Gen Movement and now I have come to love the vocation of the Volunteer. Recently I attended a National Convention for Volunteers. It was one of the most beautiful experiences of my life. In describing the meeting, I could only say, "It was *so* beautiful!" Again I found that the things I loved most about the Gen Movement, the spirituality of the Focolare, were the same for the Volunteers.

Many things have changed since leaving Brazil. I have learned a new language and discovered a new culture. I have a different job, even a different place in the Focolare Movement—but unity is the same, Jesus is the same. The fruits of living the Gospel, the joy and peace are the same.

Maria Helena

1) See inside back cover. 2) Cf. Lk. 18:30. 3) Summer gathering of the Focolare Movement. 4) See inside back cover.

U.N. Photo

"Many things have changed since leaving Brazil..."

Not just a weekend but forever

by MARY CASS

"What a strange sounding word — Focolare! That was my first thought when my mother invited me to a weekend gathering of the Focolare Movement," exclaimed Kim from Arizona.

"I was in high school at the time. I was a good student and very involved as a guitarist in our church folk group. I thought that I had a lot of better things to do. Between my friends, sports and music, I considered myself to be someone who had it 'all together'. My candid response to my mother's invitation was: 'The Focolare — who needs it?' But luckily God came into my life. . . in a kind of powerful way . . . and disassembled everything. The life that these people showed me in two days had to be pretty fascinating 'cause five months later, right after high school graduation, I packed my bags and left to follow them."

In fact, it was 2½ years ago, to the day, that Kim got off the plane in New York City to join other young people from all over North America in the School of Formation for the Focolarine.

"I remember vividly my first meeting with these people — my mother's newfound 'Focolare friends', shortly before this weekend gathering. There are no words to do justice to it. I felt we weren't meeting for the first time, but that they had always known me. All of a sudden I couldn't wait for the next day to come to be with them again.

"I remember setting several alarm clocks that night. I wanted to be the first one there at the meeting hall. I knew nothing of the Movement's spirituality but I was immediately taken by the love that was present there. I saw it with my own eyes. It was really an experience of God, compelling me to love, too. I 'woke up' and saw that there was more to life than my little world — that every action was useless if it was not based on mutual love, and that everything would pass... guitars, sports, even my family.

"I remember driving home that Saturday night with my dad; the first day of the Mini Mariapolis had concluded. 'You know it's strange Dad', I told him, 'but I really feel like God is asking me to give him everything'. It was something that I couldn't really explain . . . But I knew that when these people got ready to leave, I didn't want to be left behind, stranded in the desert."

Kim Rowley from Arizona.

"I can understand that," broke in Lucia, a third year Commercial Art major at a nearby university. "As a child, my family and I used to travel from our home in Indiana to the nearest Focolare Center in Chicago, Illinois. When we would arrive (sometimes a little tired and grumpy) we were always greeted with such smiles, such love, that I felt transformed. I, too, felt the attraction to stay with these people as long as I could. I felt they had something that I didn't have. In being with them, I felt as if a fire had been lit inside. I wanted that 'something'. Later I understood that the source of their joy came from the presence of Jesus in the midst because of the mutual love they had for one another.

"I spent as much time as I could with the Gen^2. This gave me the strength to try and live a life coherent with their Christian ideal, especially during the difficult years of high school. I found that many times I had to 'go against the current' because the world around me was acting

different from what I believed but I experienced that in trying to love Jesus in each classmate, in each person I met, God is never outdone in generosity. In response to a drop of love for him, he gave me the hundredfold.

"I felt strongly to say yes to Jesus with all my heart for whatever he wanted of me — 'You're the only one who can fill my heart', I told him, 'and I give it to you, now, completely'.

"I knew I had to back this up — God was asking me to follow him in a concrete way. I was eighteen, on a plane, cutting the ties with everyone at home, going to a city I had never seen, to begin an adventure yet unknown to me.

"Now it's going back three years to think of that moment; three years of discovering God's love anew each day; of learning the beauty in trying to build a piece of his family on earth."

Maria, an energetic young girl from Toronto, Canada, is also attending university, and wants some day to teach handicapped children. "I, too, found it hard to live as a Gen as a teenager," Maria recalls matter of factly. "I had first been introduced to the Gen as a child, and I attended the Mariapolis for many years. I remember from the very beginning that during the Mariapolis, I experienced what love really was. It was something very, very beautiful for me. It seemed to be a totally different world than the one I used to.

"As I was saying before though, it became harder as a teenager and I decided to take the easy way out — to do my own thing and forget about God.

"The moment came however when I sincerely began to search for something that I could give my whole self to; not just my mind or my athletic ability. I began to travel with a group of young people all over Canada. We had quite an exciting experience: living with some Eskimoes, then among the Indians, even seeing polar bears. Although it was exciting, when each adventure drew to a close, I found myself becoming fearful. At the end of each trip, I was always faced with the same question: 'now what will I do with my life'? — another trip.

"Suddenly, however, I became sick and had to return home for a few months to recover. I was very angry; I no longer seemed to be in control of my life. It seemed to me that I had tried everything: going back to work, to college, travelling. . . Nothing held the same excitement for me anymore.

"One day I found myself sitting in Church — something that I had not done for a long, long time — and I began to talk with God. I didn't know whether he existed or not, but I told him, 'If you're up there I want to become friends with you again; I want to start living for you'. Something inside of me changed in that moment. I had a strong desire to get in touch again with my friends of the Focolare. I phoned them and received an invitation to spend a week together in the mountains. I remember that that week was something so special, so strong for me, because you could say for me it was like spending a week in Paradise. As the end of the week drew near I kept thinking: 'This life is so beautiful, I would like to live like this forever . . .' It was a life of unity, an experience of Jesus' presence among those who love one another. Couldn't I do something to see the whole world live like that ?

"Suddenly, my college, my job, even my boyfriend couldn't compare with the attractiveness of this new life. I tried to re-immerse myself in my 'old' world . . . but my heart wasn't there anymore.

Lucia Colella from Indiana.

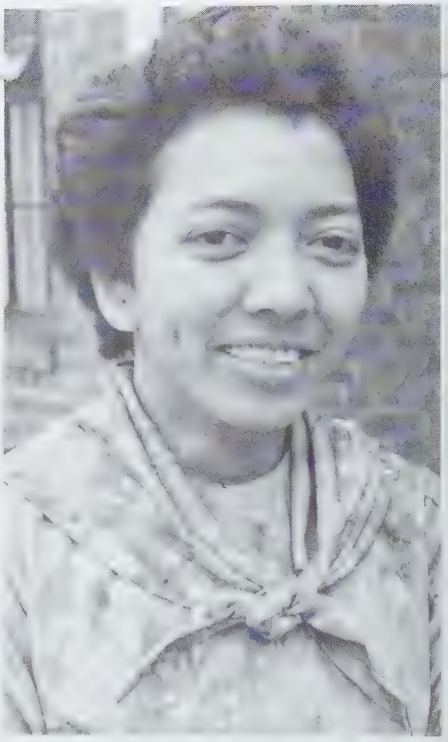
"Summer was almost over when I received an invitation from the Focolare to come to New York; it was the same time that I was offered a trip to Europe — something I had always dreamed of — I really had to make a choice! I guess my choice is obvious — right?" Maria told us, "... and I guess it's just as obvious...no regrets!"

"What struck me the most was the atmosphere of joy expressed by those of the Movement," recalls Malou with a smile. "I first met the Focolare at a Mariapolis in the Philippines. I liked their way of life. I tried it, too.

"It was only after having finished college that I found myself face to face with the 'real' world. I began to question the suffering I saw around me. Yes, it was true that I had a good job as a nurse — which I liked very much — but I felt strongly that there was something more to life. My career in nursing would not be enough for me.

"Shortly after my parents moved to the United States and I found myself at another Mariapolis in the Philippines. It was there, that after having put him aside for so long, that I rediscovered God and his love for me. The story of Chiara Lubich and the beginning of the Movement in the midst of the war made me realize that everything is vanity of vanities and in the end only God would remain. What a revolution it was in my life to put God in the first place and to love him in each neighbor. 'Only God will remain' I kept repeating to myself. It seemed to be a personal invitation to choose him as the only Ideal of my life."

"I was often troubled throughout college whenever any of my non-Christian friends would ask



Malou Bajet from Los Angeles.

Debra Castanon (left) from Texas and Maria Ferazzi from Canada.

me why I was Christian," remarked Debra from San Antonio, shaking her head. "So I resolved to either find out what a Christian was, or I wasn't going to be one," she continued firmly. "I wanted to put myself completely into whatever I believed. So I began to concentrate on certain phrases and I can remember saying, 'This is really deep, but I don't see many people doing it. For example, . . .'Thy will be done on earth'. . . Who did it'? They seemed only words.

"My boyfriend was an atheist and he too would question me about my faith. I reached the point where I wanted to put Christianity out of my life. I stopped going to Church and my relationship with my family became very strained. It seemed that everything in my life was falling apart: school, relationships with teachers, friends, my boss . . . I spent most of my time with my boyfriend and I resented anyone becoming con-

cerned about me. I wanted to prove that I was independent and had decided to cut all ties at home and begin a new life where no one knew me.

"I was going to take advantage of the Thanksgiving weekend to break the news to my family. My mother disrupted my plans by inviting her 'Focolare friends' for dinner. I forced a smile as I greeted them at the door. After dinner, everyone scrambled to the TV for the big football game and I remained alone at the table. One of the focolarine came over and we began to talk. It was only for a few minutes, but I felt like she had known me forever. There was something about her that made a deep impression on me. She had such a peace about her. It's hard to describe, but she seemed like a 'complete' person to me — a quality I had always wanted. The conversation ended with an invitation to spend a week with the Gen in Chicago.

"When I arrived in Chicago, at this Gen convention, I felt at home, as if these people knew me. Meeting each one, with her own personality, I found what was the root of their life — what it was that bound them together — it was that they had chosen to live the Gospel. To me, this was exactly what I had been looking for when I was trying to find out what a Christian was. I saw how they lived the Gospel concretely: '. . . love one another'; '. . . put your talents to the service of others'; '. . . whatever you do to the least, you do to me'. I had travelled to Chicago to be an observer; now I had watched long enough. I wanted to live this way too. This new life I had discovered was not just words. It was life; my faith lived in a real way. For the first time, I began to feel very close to God, as if I knew him personally and that he knew me. I wanted to live with him twenty four hours a day and understood that by living his will for me, this was possible.

"Arriving home, there were many things to straighten out in my life. I ended my relationship with my boyfriend because it was not in accord with this new life based on the principles of the Gospel. I had been involved in various things that were obviously harmful. They weren't coherent with my choice of God; so out they went. I was determined. My relationship with my family improved; I was able to finish University with more than passing grades.

"After a few years of trying to live love and unity, I felt that God was asking me to give all of myself. My yes was not said without a struggle, but I felt that this will of God was

The (5) Mariapolises of next summer will be the following:

SOUTHWEST:
New Mexico Highlands University
Las Vegas, New Mexico
June 26, after supper — July 2, after breakfast

MIDWEST:
University of Wisconsin
Platteville, Wisconsin
July 3, after supper — July 9, after breakfast

NORTHWEST:
Western Washington University
Bellingham, Washington
July 10, after supper — July 16, after breakfast

CARIBBEAN: **(in Spanish)**
Casa Manresa Loyola
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
July 13, after lunch — July 17, after lunch

EAST COAST:
Fordham University
Bronx, New York
August 8, after supper — August 14, after breakfast

Imelda Orozco from Mexico.

stronger than anything else. It was a 'yes' without turning back, a new beginning, *forever*!"

"I know what you mean, Debra!," Kim added with enthusiasm. "When I went to Los Angeles to visit my new friends, I really felt as if I was going home; the presence of Jesus in the Midst that I had experienced during that first meeting had become 'home' for my soul.

"I was glad to realize that the experience I was living was not limited to a weekend, that it could be forever."

Imelda, with her light brown hair and clear complexion, certainly doesn't seem to reflect her Mexican heritage. She travelled the farthest of any of us — arriving late, one snowy night from Mexico City to study English in New York.

Slowly, accentuating each word strongly, as a newcomer to the English language, Imelda told us her story. "I am the oldest of six children and come from a religiously oriented family. My Christianity, however, consisted of Sunday Mass . . . and that was it. I figured that I could be happy 'doing my thing'; that is, going to movies, parties, etc. with my friends. I completely ignored the problems and concerns of my family and therefore had no real rapport with my parents, brothers or sisters.

"As much as I wanted to lose myself in the activities surrounding my life at this time, I began to experience a real emptiness inside; each day was the same. I started to ask myself: 'What meaning is there to life'? Then I met a young man; we started dating and eventually became engaged. I thought I had discovered someone that I could finally open up with . . . who would listen to me; this would make me happy, I thought. However, even my wedding plans, the thought of a beautiful family, didn't fill the emptiness I felt inside.

"It was about this time that I noticed a change in my family; their rapport with one another was different. There was a new element of happiness in the home. Their particular concern and love for me, urged me one day to communicate all that I felt inside — my desperation — to them. The way they listened to me made me feel understood... 'Where did *you* find this new happiness'? I asked them. It was then that they told me the story of Chiara; and how they were trying to love God, by loving one another. I saw that they had found the happiness I was searching for. Strengthened by their love, I began to experience God's particular love for me — that empty spot was becoming filled. New hope entered my life; I began to try and put into practice this mutual love with my mother, my brothers and sisters, trying to love Jesus in each one of them. I felt a real sense of freedom and joy. My life did have a meaning — it was Jesus, who was giving me everything that I had been searching for, and much, much more. After living in this 'new' way for some months, I felt God was asking me to give him everything and I couldn't but say 'yes'!"

A small group of young women, an island of unity, an effort to see that mutual love is lived.

In a short while they will leave for Loppiano, Italy, a mini-city of the Focolare where their formation will continue. There they will meet many more young people from all over the world.

The achievement of unity there amongst all — which has made someone say: if it is possible here then it is possible everywhere — is a sign of hope.

And if we asked all the people, who are there to spend a few years before being scattered anew all over the world, why they are there, most likely they would answer: "If we are one, one day the world will be one." The one life we have we would like to live so that in every corner of the globe, wherever we will be, we may contribute to bringing closer to its fulfillment Jesus' prayer to the Father "That all may be one." □

1) Cf. Mt. 18:20.
2) See inside back cover.

What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

FOCOLARE means "hearth," "family fireside." What first strikes people when they come in contact with members of the Focolare, whether in small groups or in large gatherings, is the atmosphere of a family. It is a family formed by many different people in various walks of life. The Focolare Movement is also known as the "Work of Mary." Under this name it was approved by Pope John XXIII in 1962.

The Focolare Movement began in 1943 in Italy. In the midst of the terrible destruction of World War II, Chiara Lubich realized that God is the only one worth living for. As a result, she began to center her life on the Gospel, together with a small group of young women who followed her. Their ideal became one of striving toward the fulfillment of Jesus' last prayer to the Father: "May they all be one" (Jn.17:21).

The life of Chiara and her first companions, and the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to the unique form of spirituality of the Focolare Movement, a spirituality of unity. It has proved to be a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life, of going to God together.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. They work as other laymen and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini" and form the backbone of a vast Movement within the Movement, called the New Family Movement.

THE VOLUNTEERS AND THE NEW HUMANITY MOVEMENT

The Volunteers, also called the "Volunteers of God," are a large group within the Focolare Movement; they would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. The Volunteers are the backbone of the mass movement called New Humanity. The aim of this Movement is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation. The Gen have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love and to sharing with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

THE MOVEMENT AMONG THE RELIGIOUS

Men and women religious — although they live according to their own rules and constitutions and are already a distinct part of the Church through their religious families — can also be associated with the Focolare.

Contact with the Movement helps them to focus their attention on the specific charism of their founders, and to see how it can be lived in the present time.

PRIESTS — PRIESTS' MOVEMENT —SEMINARIANS — PARISH MOVEMENT

Many diocesan priests are committed to living the spirituality of the Focolare Movement. Some of them live in community. They form the backbone of the Priests' Movement which is made up of priests who live the spirituality of unity.

FOCOLARE FAMILY

The largest group within the Focolare Movement is made up of men, women and young people who are connected with the Movement without having any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their acceptance of its spirit and their desire to live it.

ECUMENISM

The Movement not only crossed the political boundaries of more than 100 countries, it has also gone beyond the barriers erected for centuries between the various Christian Churches.

Ecumenical activities take place in the different parts of the world where the Movement exists.

In the past few years a promising, ongoing dialogue has been established with faithful of other religions.

SUMMER MARIAPOLIS

Summer meetings are held every year for those interested in the Movement and for those who wish to come into contact with it. For one week persons of all ages and walks of life are exposed to the spirituality of unity. Above all, they strive to practice it by creating among themselves a rapport that molds them into a community. It is intended to be a basic experience of such intense unity that the people will be able to bring it back into their own environments. And this is the most striking fruit of these conventions. They tend to be models of a world which lives according the Gospel.

PERMANENT MARIAPOLIS

The need to prolong the experience of the summer meetings brought about the birth of small cities called Permanent Mariapolis. They are made up of young men and women, as well as whole families, who are there for a designated period of time to be formed according to the Gospel spirit of unity.

They also attend classes in Sacred Scripture, Theology and Sociology and work for their own support.

MARIAPOLIS CENTERS

In addition to the Permanent Mariapolis, there are Mariapolis Centers, which are training centers for the members of the Movement.

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